Emily Holmes

AP English Language and Composition

Lane

March 11, 2010

Education Essay

“Class Rank”

When a student applies to a college, every detail they put on their admissions paper could possibly aid them to beat out many other potential applicants. Some details, including SATS, GPAS, essays, and class rank, play large roles in the admission process. Nevertheless, why are high schools around the country dropping class rank? A number of high schools are discovering that class rank hinders many more than it aids. Although some colleges do not completely agree with eliminating class ranks, many high schools, mostly private, have already made the decision. (“Class Rank College Admissions”)

If schools are doing away with class rank, how important can it be to colleges? According to a survey by the National Association for College Admission’s Counseling, only 23.1% of colleges surveyed labeled class rank of considerable importance. (Smith, 2008) Even though rank is not an enormous factor in the admissions process, the absence of it could leave a student’s application slightly more ambiguous to colleges. Colleges can still use graphs to average a student’s grade into a rank or category. (Finder, 2006) With the removal of class rank, many students, parents, and teachers question whether this will cause admissions officers to heavily rely on student’s GPAs and SAT scores. (Ferkenhoff, 2006) Students who are in the top 15% of their class could be slightly penalized from this; while they might be at the top of their class, a lower SAT score and a hidden rank could severely weaken their chances of being accepted into their college of choice. For the other 75% of students in that class, a reverse outcome would occur. Because of this, many high schools understand that the removal of rank would have a positive effect on the majority of their students.

Despite agreeing that forgoing class rank hurts the top 15% of students, I believe that the majority matters more than the minority. Students that could be ranked top in another school, but are ranked middling because they are in a small or competitive school creates an unfair disadvantage for them. I disagree with many colleges’s views that class rank should have anything to do with the admissions process. Class rank is a shortcut and an excuse for colleges to decide which applicants they want to pick. College admissions officers should be largely basing there choices off of students GPAs and essays. These two factors give a general idea of how hard working the student is and who they are as a person. Focusing less on class rank ultimately helps the majority of students.

Class rank labels students to easily place them in a category of “accepted” or “denied” without really having to look at every aspect of what kind of person they are. For example, two students who applied to Swarthmore might have had the same credentials, but one could have been ranked a few places higher than the other. This possibly complex and difficult situation was easily and wrongly solved by a rank. These two students could have been from completely different sized schools, and comparing there ranks to each others should mean nothing. High schools are right to argue that class rank should be eliminated, but I believe students should have a choice to whether or not they can put rank on their transcripts. Leaving this option for students would leave many colleges and higher ranked students content. Giving everyone a reasonable choice is the answer to this dilemma.

Creating a fair opportunity for the majority of students is what high schools are most interested in. Without class rank, colleges have to examine every portion of who the student is and how well they excel in school, rather than seeing them as a position. (Finder, 2006) Many private or smaller schools have a large amount of students with high GPAs and favorable SAT scores. This creates a condition where a student ranked in the thirtieth percentile in a private or smaller school would likely be ranked in the tenth percentile at a larger, less competitive school.

High schools have started to acknowledge that this is a fault in the system, and many have decided to make a change. A more artificial reason high schools are rethinking class rank is to reduce competition among students for a more obedient environment. (Finder, 2006) Despite the solution of decreasing competition, the controversy over eliminating class rank has created an equally concerning dilemma.

I completely agree the colleges should be rethinking and realizing the flaws of class rank. High schools and colleges are not entirely on the same page when it comes to class rank, and I believe that both sides need to create medium. Although high schools should be altering the ranking system, I disagree with the argument that it is too competitive. I believe that the reason why high schools insist to drop class rank is not to reduce a little competition, but to reduce cut-throat cat fights and possible lawsuits involving the top students. (Lombardi, 2008) High schools have given this explanation that rankings hurts student’s feeling and makes them believe they are inadequate. (Finder 2008) I completely disagree with this pathetic excuse that hides the underlying fact that high schools too are afraid to deal the wrath of determined students and their parents. Many hardworking students are likely to be dissatisfied or find a flaw in their rank, which creates several angry parents and students the schools have to deal with. Although this is one minor reason that should not be given by high schools to eliminate class rank, the argument that class rank should be eliminated is still very much present.

High school boards from around the country realize that the students who are in disagreement with removing class rank are also the students who are taking challenging classes. (Turner 116) These students want to be recognized for their good grades in difficult courses, and this has lead high schools to adopt a weighted GPA program. With a weighted GPA, students have a better chance of increasing there GPA with challenging classes. Furthermore, a student’s grade point average plays a much larger role in the admissions process compared to class rank. (Smith, 2008) Students benefit from weighted classes, and college admissions are able to recognize the hard work put in by the students more clearly than they would be able to with class rank. Another alternative to class rank is to place students in a quartile ranking. (Turner 116) Students are label in a broad group to explain to colleges generally where students place compared to their whole class. While this concept is not as specific as class rank, it provides a vast label for a student though still giving them a status. Even as many high schools have done so already, a common alternative to class rank is greatly needed in the high school system.

From my own experience with the elimination of class rank, I believe that a substitute is necessary for the absence of class rank. Fairview High School just adopted a heavily weighted GPA that allows students to be put in Latin honors groups to recognize scholastic distinction. This weighted program will increase many students GPAs, including myself. I believe this program gives students a reward for taking a more difficult class that will benefit them in the long run. Overtime, I think weighted GPAs will increase the desire for students to take more challenging courses. My class is the last to have an option to put their class rank on their transcript. In my opinion, the school should offer this option every year along with the recognition of Latin honors. While is it true that alternatives to class rank are vital, it does not necessarily mean class rank has to be completely gone.

Over time, the elimination of class rank will be common for schools, students, and colleges. Before this can happen, there has to be a universal decision in the education system to agree on what best benefits the student and their schooling. They have to recognize all the flaws in class rank, and decide on the best alternatives to adopt. Hopefully soon, during the admissions process, a student will not be chosen for being a position or label, but rather will be chosen for their academic success as a person. The elimination of class rank throughout many high schools shows that they are ready to make a change to benefit their students for a lifetime.

Works Cited

"Class Rank College Admissions ." *CollegeBoard*. N.p., n.d. Web. 11 Mar. 2010. <<http://www.diigo.com/09uwm>>.

Ferkenhoff, Eric. "How Schools Are Pulling Rank -- Printout -- TIME." *Time*. N.p., 10 July 2006. Web. 11 Mar. 2010. <<http://www.diigo.com/09uwo>>.

Finder, Alan . "Schools Avoid Class Ranking, Vexing Colleges - New York Times." *The New York Times*. N.p., 5 Mar. 2006. Web. 11 Mar. 2010. <<http://www.diigo.com/09uwi>>.

Lombardi, Kate Stone. "The Frenzied Battle to Be Valedictorian - NYTimes.com." *The New York Times*. N.p., 29 June 2008. Web. 11 Mar. 2010. <<http://www.diigo.com/09uwq>>.

Smith, Ashley. "Class rank demoted in college admissions process | The News-Sentinel - Fort Wayne IN." *News-Sentinel*. N.p., 4 June 2008. Web. 11 Mar. 2010. <<http://www.diigo.com/09uwn>>.

Turner, Oneal. "9." *Complete Idiots Guide To College Planning*. New York: Alpha, 1999. 115-116. Print. 11 Mar. 2010. <<http://www.diigo.com/09uws>>